BETWEEN POPES AND KINGS: REASSESSING THE POWER DYNAMICS IN FRANCE THROUGH THE TEMPLAR TRIALS, 1296-1314

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March 28, 2014

Honors Thesis submitted to the Rutgers University History Department
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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Paola Tartakoff, for her hours devoted to helping me throughout this project. I am very grateful for her many insights and critiques. I would also like to thank my second reader Professor Anthony DiBattista for his patience, support, and much needed confidence boosts. They have my sincerest gratitude.

I must also extend my thanks to the Rutgers History Department, especially Professor Jennifer Jones for offering her time and advice in the hectic, early stages of this project. I am also grateful to Professor Mike Peixoto, of Sarah Lawrence University, for his excellent class on the Crusades and for sharing his expertise on the Templars, as well as his guidance through the Archives Nationale in Paris.

Finally I wish to thank my family for their love and compassion and my friends for sticking by me even though I was never free to hang out. You mean the world to me.

Gratias vobis ago.
Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of Problem & Significance

This thesis examines the role of Philip the Fair, King of France from 1285 to 1314, in influencing the behaviors of two important medieval popes, Boniface VIII and Clement V, particularly between 1291 and 1310. During this period, the Knights Templar, the military order turned international bankers, would experience a dramatic loss in the Holy Land that would lead to questions regarding their purpose and usefulness, especially by the French King. Philip’s attempt to eliminate the Templars from his kingdom, where the Templars were headquartered, supposedly to acquire their property created a crisis within the Catholic Church. As a Christian military organization, the Templars swore their allegiance to the pope, and expected protection in return. Philip’s interference in the ecclesiastic affairs in his kingdom would cause a crisis within the church, concerning its waning temporal power, to which Boniface and Clement would respond negatively. Philip’s legacy as a descendant of Saint Louis would encourage his encroachment into spiritual affairs, especially the inquisition of heretics. While Boniface fought to maintain policy of papal infallibility surrounded by declining public opinion in France, Clement tried to repair diplomacy between the church and French court.

As “Vicar of God” and “Most Christian King,” Philip no longer felt dependent on the pope’s approval. His well known piety was enough to make him more powerful than the pope within France. He relied heavily on his advisors; enough so to convince many of the French clergy that he was being manipulated by them. Although it is highly unlikely that a man with as much power behind him as Philip could be so easily swayed by the advice of close councilors, like Guillaume de Nogaret and Enguerrand de Marigny, his policies did, more often than not, reflect their recommendations. Nogaret’s rise to power, from a provincial lawyer to Keeper of
the Seals, also symbolized a change in how Philip would organize his court. Unlike his predecessors, who were wary of the Midi region after the Albigensian Crusade, Philip incorporated more nobles and officials from Languedoc and Auvergne into his council in an effort to unify the kingdom. This would become a critical task, as early on in his reign, disputes with England, Flanders, and Aragon could have provoked secession in the south. Philip involved the region in his government to subdue dissent and was also able to ensure that those he raised up would be loyal to him, as their political careers depended on his favor. This shift in the regional demographic of the king’s council may also have been attributed to his suspicion of the nobles of the Ile de France, whose network of nobles had become influential during his father’s reign.¹ In order to carry out almost any of his future endeavors, he would require advisors like Pierre Flore, Guillaume de Nogaret, and Enguerrand de Marigny who were unfailingly loyal to their sovereign.

Despite their political divergence, Philip was on good terms with Rome for the majority of his twenty-nine year reign; Boniface’s pontificate inclusive. The majority of Philip’s council was made up of clergy, as was common practice at this time, and the bishops he kept close were useful administrators.² Although he is best remembered for his passionate persecution of a religious order, he maintained a symbiotic relationship with the Catholic Church that can be attributed to Clement’s capitulation.

The trial of the Templars stands out within the history of the medieval inquisition because of Philip’s influence over the arrests and proceedings, as well as Clement’s sudden reversal of Church dogma to accommodate Philip. It is also important to understanding the legacy of the Crusades as a whole, as Philip IV may have needed the resources of the Knights Templar to fund

¹ Lambert, Malcolm. Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation, 43.
² Lambert, 237.
a crusade to prove himself as a Christian king and worthy of being a descendant of the pious crusader king Louis IX. The trial represents a strong tension between the secular and religious spheres in France that would change the balance of power between the monarchy and pontificate in France for the rest of the Middle Ages.

History of the Knights Templar

Since their foundation as the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ on Christmas Day, 1119, the Knights Templar enjoyed a favorable position with the kings of Europe and the Pope as they protected pilgrims and potential settlers on their way to the Holy Land. They were created in response to the growing number of travelers to Jerusalem, a direct result of the First Crusade. The role of the Templars as the protectors of pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land reinforced their “pious” reputation, and thus awarded them autonomy in the Middle East, away from the eyes of the Pope.

As pilgrims set out from Western Europe towards the Middle East, they faced dangers of being robbed, killed, raped, and enslaved. Knowing the dangers that visitors his kingdom faced, French-born King Baldwin II of Jerusalem approached Hugh de Payns, a veteran of the First Crusade from northeastern France, and persuaded him to form a lay community explicitly for the protection of pilgrims, which would secure Hugh and his comrades absolution of any sins committed while on crusade, such as violence against the Muslim people. Despite the roles of Baldwin and the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Warmund of Picquigny, in the creation of the official detail, the Templars as a Christian Military Order owed their fidelity to the Pope, as they “bound themselves to Christ’s service in the hands of the Lord Patriarch.”

In *Historia Rerum in Partibus Transmarinis Gestarum* [History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea], written circa 1170, William of Tyre described the founding of Knighthood five decades earlier.

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3 William of Tyre. “The Foundation of the Order to the Knights Templar.”
after their founding, using secondhand information. In this brief history of the Templars, he claims that by around 1170, the Templars’ “wealth is equal to the treasures of kings.”

From his chronicle, it is clear that William disapproves of the Templars, as their influence in Jerusalem was starting to rival his own as he contended for the office of Patriarch of Jerusalem. Although William’s account is likely an amalgamation of several firsthand accounts, his close relationship to Amalric I of Jerusalem, gives veracity to his short history.

Also from William’s chronicle, we see the first conflict between the Templars and their hosts, when according to William they “forgot about humility, the guardian of all virtues...and abandoned the Patriarch of Jerusalem, who had established their Order and granted them their first benefices.” Here William states that the Templars “abandoned” their allegiance to the Patriarch of Jerusalem around the same time that they started accruing more benefices from other feudal lords and thus were no longer dependent on Stephen of Chartres, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and “caused many problems for the churches of God by removing their tithes and unjustly harassing their possessions.”

Although the Templars had always officially owed their allegiance to the Pope, here William, perhaps as the mouthpiece of Amalric II, implies that they did not show the appropriate amount of fidelis to someone that had offered them the Holy Sepulchre as their offices and endorsed them at the Council of Troyes in 1129. This chronicle also shows the growing resentment towards the Knights Templar as they amassed more wealth, and left their days as “Poor Fellow-Soldiers” behind. They quickly became a banking monopoly in the Middle East as pilgrims and crusaders trusted them with their valuables. The Templars had controlled a huge fortune and maintained several castles across Europe, which would perhaps seems threatening to a secular king.

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4 William of Tyre.
5 William of Tyre.
6 William of Tyre.
The impoverished order of fighting monks had transformed into a bureaucracy and a bank. Their primary objective may have been to protect travelling pilgrims from bandits, but the Templars were an international organization. Their secondary job of protecting the livelihoods of crusaders and pilgrims came naturally as they managed estates and organized markets.\(^7\) In April of 1147, Pope Eugenius and the King Louis VII of France visited the new Templar headquarters in Paris to assign them the duty of collecting a tax on church goods to finance the Second Crusade, effectively establishing the Paris Temple as the treasury of France.\(^8\)

Even though the Templars managed vast amounts of wealth across Europe, their entire purpose was to protect innocent Christians in the Outremer. This is why the Fall of Acre, a port located in modern-day Israel, in 1291 was so devastating to their order. Before 1291, advancing Mamluk Turks’ forces had conquered Antioch in 1268 and Tripoli in 1289, leaving Acre as the last stronghold between the Mamluks and Jerusalem. After the battle, the King of Jerusalem fled, and the Holy Lands that had been held by Christians for a century were lost. Typical medieval beliefs meant that the sins of the settlers in the Outremer were to blame, including the Templars, for angering God and allowing the crusaders’ cause to fall out of favor.

Public opinion shifted against the Templars, who had been trusted implicitly by pilgrims for almost two hundred years. Europe was dejected by the loss of the Holy Land, and Christians, particularly in France, rebuked the Knights Templar for their failure to fulfill their resolution to protect it. This is the political climate in which Jacques de Molay was elected in 1293, and he believed that another crusade was the answer to restoring the Knights’ prestige. Without travel and trade to the Middle East, the Templars were a religious organization with property in every region of the continent for no reason, so it was imperative for their survival that the Templars put

\(^8\) Barber, Malcolm.  *The Trial of the Templars*, 3.
their fighting skills to good use, or prepare to relinquish all of their property and wealth. Understandably, after centuries of warfare with the Muslims, Christian in the West were not eager to begin another expensive crusade, which would include rallying war-weary knights and the equivalent of millions of dollars to get them hundred of miles across the continent.

After essentially becoming irrelevant in the Crusader States, the Templars were forced to abdicate their positions in the French Treasury by Philip in 1295. The treasury had always belonged to the French king; the Templars had only been charged with guarding it. Each quarter, which was broken up by feast days of saints and other Christian holidays, the Templars provided a statement to the king’s clerk. These accounting periods did not match up with those of the crown, which made the system inefficient. The only other job the brothers had while in charge of the treasury was to see which bailis, or magistrates, still owed money to the king at the end of each cycle; however the Templars did not have the authority to pursue those in debt to the crown.9 In 1295, the treasury was removed from the Paris Temple and placed in the Treasury of the Louvre to be permanently monitored by clerks.10 Their banking system had worked well enough during peacetime, but the threat of war was becoming a constant in Philip’s reign.

Nearly 15,000 people were arrested, with about 220 of them being Knights. One hundred and eighteen charges were brought against them, including sodomy, demon worshipping, and denying saints. Roman inquisitorial tactics were used against them, and many in France were tortured. The implied use of torture exclusively in France, and the various confessions provided by French Templars as compared to their brothers abroad suggests that the trial became extensive and thorough across France, particularly in Paris under William de Nogaret.

Historiography

9 Strayer, Joseph. The Reign of Philip the Fair, 172.
10 Strayer, 81.
The relationship between Philip and Clement has been a popular subject since the trial began as their communication, and sometimes lack of, had such an impact on the fate of the Templars. Primary sources from the period are written primarily in Latin, with some letters between Philip and his ministers in Old French. Malcolm Barber, a retired professor of Medieval Studies at the University of Reading, published his *The Templars: Sources Translated and Annotated* in 2002 with Keith Bate, also of the University of Reading. Their sources in translation, spanning from William of Tyre’s account of the Templars’ founding (circa 1180) to Clement’s papal bull *Vox in excelso* disbanding the Order in 1312 provide the most evidence used in this research.

Before the endeavors of Barber and Bate to provide Latin to English translations of invaluable letters, chronicles, and testimony relating to the trial, one of the first modern historians to study the Templars was the Marquis Andre D’Albon, a nineteenth century French nobleman who primarily studied Lyonnais history. He gathered the Templar sources from the French Archives Nationale to produce the General Cartulaire Temple, the first manuscript to contain records of the Templars’ legal rights as a military order, financial and property records, and the original Rule in one volume. Published after D’Albon’s death in 1922, his sources paved the way for futures like Barber and Bate, and Henry Charles Lea. Lea, who discusses the Templars in the third volume of *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, is among the modern historians that believe that the trial was corrupt and the charges were fabricated. Several other historians referenced in this paper are of the same mind, including Malcolm Lambert, Helen J. Nicholson, and Anne Gilmour-Bryson, who argue that the use of torture on the brothers by the Philip’s men during the inquisition heavily influenced the confessions received from French brothers compared to the near unanimous denials received from inquisitions in the British
Isles and Cyprus. This paper acknowledges the disparities between testimonies from France and across the Temples of Europe, but cannot presume to accuse the inquisitors of torture, as it was not recorded with confessions, as would have customary of the time. Seven hundred years later, there is no clear consensus on the motivation behind the arrests, which is perhaps why the subject has interested so many academics.

Another important source that this paper takes into account is a fairly recent discovery. Commonly referred to as “the Chinon Parchment,” the document was discovered in 2002 in the Vatican Archives and published in 2007. The official document, “Investigation Carried Out by the Fathers Commissioned by Pope Clement V in the Town of Chinon, diocese of Tour” is a record of testimony gathered by three cardinals dispatched late into the trial by the pope when he became suspicious of Philip’s secular courts. In the document, the leaders of the Order beg for forgiveness, and subsequently absolved. Frale and Barber believe that this document, which was never released to the public, was meant to absolve the entire order, but would not have necessarily prevented their disbandment. A.A. Grishin’s The Knights Templar Absolution: The Chinon Parchment and the History of the Poor Knights of Christ provides a Latin to English translation of the document.

Methodology

The purpose of my research is to explore the relationship between two of the main actors in the Templar Trials- King Philip IV of France and Pope Clement V, and how their actions affected the fate of the Templars. By examining the motives behind Clement V’s drastically different approach to Philippe le Bel from that of his predecessor Boniface VIII, this paper will address Clement’s efforts to smooth tensions between Paris and Avignon and how they ultimately led to the arrest, imprisonment, and execution of the leader of the ubiquitous Templar
As the Order owed their allegiance to the pope as their main benefactor and protector, it is important to understand how a layman like Philip IV was able to bring charges against the Order. As the Knight Templar was a religious order, any heresy committed by members should have fallen under ecclesiastical law, where Philip had no jurisdiction. The fact that the brothers in France failed as an organization to avoid mass incarceration and executions on heretical charges demonstrates their weakening influence in Europe and especially the Middle East. This includes examining the relationship that existed by the French King and the Pope through the letters exchanged by the two discussing suspicions of heresy within the Order. The most circulated and well-known sources from the period of 1291 to 1312 remain papal bulls. Boniface’s early bulls directed at the King of France, including Clericis laicos, Unam sanctam, and Ausculta fili are examined in this research. Others sources of note include a series of letters between Philip and the Masters of the University of Paris, letters between Philip and Clement up to and following the arrests, and the arrest warrant itself. Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate provide these sources in English.

The second chapter discusses the important years leading up to the trial, specifically the conflict between Philip and Boniface VIII. Through a series of papal bulls studied here, Boniface challenged the spiritual authority of “the Most Christian King Philip” and paid heavily for it. He was widely criticized by the French public and even Dante for his claims of universal sovereignty over Christendom. The vitriol between Boniface and Philip, which would lead to an assassination attempt on the pope’s life by Philip’s future chancellor Guillaume de Nogaret, sets the tone for Clement’s pontificate and establishes an imbalance of power between Paris and Rome.
Chapter Three discusses the election of Clement V and argues that he was unable to prevent servants and even merchants associated with the organization from being put to death as result of his submission to the King’s will. Through analysis of the letters sent to the French king on August 24 and October 27, 1307, using Barber and Bate’s translation, one can see how Clement acknowledged his duty to protect the Templars from secular persecution.

The third chapter of this thesis specifically examines the testimony of the trial to determine the extent of Philip’s involvement in coercing confessions that would force the pope to disband the order. As Philip was fighting wars with England and Aragon, he wanted to liquidate the Templar property to fund the armies. Anne Gilmour-Bryson and Malcolm Lambert both make the case that torture was only used in France on the king’s order for his own purposes. Using four depositions of Jacques de Molay from 1307 to 1310, in which he expressed confidence that the order would be absolved, compared to several testimonies from England and Cyprus, this chapter will demonstrate Philip’s personal interest in the outcome of the trial and Clement’s hesitancy to intervene.

After 1291, the Templars had lost their position abroad and at home, and mainly operated as landlords in the French kingdom. All of their responsibilities and prestige had been taken from them, which made them easily disposable. This all occurred at a time when the French king was desperate for money, as by 1292, he was spending more money than his regime was earning and had no way of raising revenue besides the tenth. On top of his financial strain, he was eager to stockpile funds for an imminent conflict with any one of his neighboring enemies. At this moment Boniface demanded Philip stop collecting the tenth from his discontent clergy.

While Clement V may have wanted to protect the order as Boniface had done, he also had an interest in their arrest. In their weakened condition, he could combine the many
cruising orders like the Hospitallers to create one united order. Here, Boniface’s bull *Unam Sanctam*, reveals an interesting contrast between the two popes. Boniface threatens excommunication to kings and feudal lords who impose taxes on the clergy, whereas Clement turns a blind eye. This shift in papal policy that occurred during the trial of the Templars in France was a result of coercion from the French king. The drastic changes in the rhetoric used by Boniface and Clement demonstrates an increase in monarchical power.
Chapter II: The Antagonism of Boniface VIII

Boniface VIII, who served as Pontifex Maximus from 1294 to 1303, was widely criticized in his time for his sweeping proclamations concerning the temporal power of the papacy, provoking the French monarchy. His series of papal bulls clearly stated his belief that spiritual authority outweighed the temporal authority of “emperors, kings, or princes, dukes, counts or barons, podestas, captains or officials or rectors- by whatever name they are called, whether of cities, castle, or any places whatever, wherever situated...”11 While Clement and Boniface’s predecessor, Celestine V, often bent to the will of their local monarchs, Boniface obstinately defended the faith, or rather his position, from temporal intrusion. The near constant antagonism between Philip and Boniface is a prelude to the struggle between Philip and Clement over the Templars.

The election of Boniface VIII was controversial and occurred under unusual circumstances. To understand the context of the feud between Philip and Boniface, one must understand the difficulties facing the Catholic Church. After two years in conclave after the retirement of Celestine, the cardinals proclaimed his close personal advisor Benedict Gaetani as the Bishop of Rome. To have the most important Holy See unoccupied for so long, the Church must have appeared fragile to an outside observer. Celestine had been notoriously weak-willed compared to Philip and Charles II of Naples (in whose kingdom he held the papal court), and the election of Boniface marked a dramatic change in position towards secular influence. Rumors circulated that Boniface had forced Celestine to resign his post, and then had him imprisoned in Campania, Italy, which Philip used to question his legitimacy as pope. Since canon law stated that Celestine would be the Bishop of Rome until his death, Boniface could only be considered a

11 Boniface VIII. Papal Bull, Clericis Laicos.
de facto pontiff.

In 1295, just as Boniface’s reign was beginning, Philip entered into war with England, and wanted to continue using tithes from the French clergy to fund it. This war with England would be the reason Philip pursued access to the Templar treasury in Paris. This was a subsidy that Philip had depended on to fund his war with Aragon, which had recently ended under orders from Boniface. The church concluded that since the war had ended, so too should the flow of ecclesiastical funds, unless the kingdom was in imminent peril. Of course, Phillip and the Catholic Church maintained different definitions of what constituted a pressing need for funds, and the Cistercian Order of Citeaux made a complaint to the pope when the king’s “mute dogs” came to collect. Boniface’s response was swift and threatening, and likely not what Philip had anticipated at all.

In *Clerics Laicos*, published in 1296, Boniface publicly reprimanded Philip for imposing taxes on the clergy, beginning with the statement that “laymen are in a high degree hostile to the clergy” and that “some prelates of the church...dreading more to offend the temporal than the eternal majesty, without obtaining the authority or permission of the Apostolic chair, do acquiesce, not so much rashly as improvidently, in the abuses of such persons.” Here it can be inferred that Boniface is referring not on to the taxation of the clergy, but also abusing their relationship with “fighting monks” like the Templars, as rumors spread quickly that Philip used Templar property stored in Paris to fund his ongoing war with the English-ally Flanders. In no uncertain terms, Boniface forbid all secular rulers from demanding subsidies from the clergy without the express permission of the pope, or face excommunication.

There is, however, historical precedent for the impassioned tone and grave punishments

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12 Boniface VIII. *Clerics laicos.*
14 Boniface VIII. *Clerics laicos.*
described in Clericis Laicos, such as Gregory VII’s famous bull against lay investiture in 1073. From Gregory’s private register, Dictatus Papae (Dictates of the Pope) shows that he believed “the Roman pontiff alone can with right be called universal,” and “that it be permitted of him to depose emperors.”15 Popes Gregory and Boniface were in similar situations regarding the overstep of absolute monarchs into ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and both aired their grievances to the monarchs through papal bull. Gregory railed against Henry’s “unheard of insolence” and released “all Christians from the bonds of the oath which they have made or shall make to him; and I forbid anyone to serve him as king.”16 When Gregory absolved the German princes of their fealty to the king, he removed the risk that they will be held in escheat, leaving them with nothing to stop them should they wish to elect a new emperor. In both 1076 and 1296, the threat of excommunication is the same, but it holds dramatically less weight for Philip.

Boniface threatened the French king and nobility “of whatever pre-eminence, condition, or standing who shall impose, exact or receive such payments, or shall anywhere arrest, seize or presume to take possession of the belongings of churches or ecclesiastical persons which are deposited in sacred buildings…[or] also all who shall knowingly give aid, counsel or favor in the aforesaid things, whether publicly or secretly- shall incur, by the act itself the sentence of excommunication.” Only on their deathbed, with appropriate papal approval can their sentence be revoked.17 Henry was forced to beg in the snow for papal absolution to keep his throne, but there was never any chance of Boniface’s bull having the same effect.

Philip ignored Boniface’s threat of excommunication when on August 17, 1296 he released an ordinance creating an embargo on the trade of silver and gold and also stopped Florentine bankers across France from accepting payments into the accounts of the pope and

15 Gregory, VII. "Dictatus Papae, 1090."
16 Gregory VII. "First Deposition and Banning of Henry VII (February 22, 1076)."
17 Boniface VIII. Clericis Laicos.
Embargoes like this were common during wartime, so it may have been that Philip was trying to create a stock of goods for the impending war, but in the midst of this conflict with Boniface, it appeared to be an attack on the papacy. This was a delayed but strong reaction to *Clericus Laicos*, which worked decisively in Philip’s favor. Not only did Boniface not impose a sentence of excommunication on Philip for his continued exploitation of the French clergy, but he also followed the bull with a series of affectionate letters confirming his admiration and friendship with France.

French bishops did not seem surprised by Philip’s counter and refused the pope’s request to gather in Rome to discuss the bull out of fear of retaliation from the king. The Archbishop of Rheims had even written to Boniface before the bull’s release urging him to reconsider his tone and consider the adverse consequences it might pose for the French clergy:

> The king and his barons reproach us for not contributing to the defense of the kingdom, although prelates are held to do so, some by obligations to of their fiefs, almost all by the oath of fealty; the king threatens us with withdrawal of the support we need in order to live in safety; this is the ruin of the Church.

It would seem that Boniface would have expected such a retort, but through his letters to Philip in August of that year, it seems that he did, or at least wanted Philip to think so. In his bull, *Ineffabilis Amor*, he projected a shocked air, but evidently did not regret his previous statements, “wretch! Do not forget that without the support of the Church thou canst not resist them [being the Italians, English, and Spanish]. What would happen to thee, were thou to make her the ally of thy enemies, and thy principal adversary?”

Despite these bold words, Boniface must have been taken aback to some extent by

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18 Wood, Charles T. *Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII: State vs. Papacy*, 27.
Philip’s decisive answer to Clericis, but as the title would suggest, the bull ultimately is more friendly and gentle than his previous ones. Boniface tried to justify the meaning of the bull, but his words served only to suggest annoyance that he had been misunderstood, “I know that there are malevolent people around thee who insinuate: ‘Prelates are no longer going to be able to serve the king with their fiefs...this is false! We have explained this many times in conversation with thy counselors.’” Its clear how the last sentence can be interpreted as an insult, especially to Philip’s councilor and Keeper of the Seal Guillaume de Nogaret. From the opening line “ineffabilis amor (extreme love),” this letter is meant as a form of apology, but Boniface either did not understand or accept his position as the defendant.

In fairness to Boniface, he was placed in an unfortunate position with the territorial wars between France and England. Boniface could not have approved subsidies to one without seeming to denounce the other, and he was expected in his position as pope to act as peace keeper between the two Catholic nations. In addressing all secular princes, he was giving equal treatment to both France and England. Also, in a sense, Benedict was defending the Cistercian monastery in Citeaux, who were defenseless themselves to oppose the king. Many Cistercian monks had already been suspicious of Philip before they were targeted; as they were not satisfied with the use their donations were put to (in the war with England rather than crusade). It may have been that Boniface believed he was doing his duty by defending the orders of the Church. In any case, Boniface’s hard line on tithes would not earn him any respect from the French court. Philip’s supporters released a series of treatises in defense of his broad legislative power, all of which declare the same point: to forbid the king from taxing the clergy to protect his kingdom and the safeguard of his people was against natural law.

Between 1295 and 1297, Philip’s unyielding stance on the embargo pushed Boniface to

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release a series of papal bulls effectively contradicting *Clericis Laicos*. The king could tax the clergy to fund a war against the Count of Flanders, whose treason and alliance with the English was considered a “pressing need.” By backing down to Philip, Boniface proved to be vulnerable to French hostility and was still forced to suffer the humiliation of pamphlets circulating France that declared “Antequam essent clerici, rex Franciae habebat custodiam regni sui (before there was clergy, the King of France had charge of his reign).”

Boniface had also come under attack by the dynamic Colonna family of Italy, who openly accused him of manipulating Celestine’s abdication and refused to accept the validity of his accession. Without allies in the Italian peninsula, the pope was dependent on French support; and tried win favor in France through the canonization of Louis IX, and the concession of a double tenth in his bull *Etsu de Statu*. Already seen as powerless to Philip and his advisors, Boniface was not even permitted to save face as peacekeeper between France and England in 1298 as the pontiff, instead forced to attend the armistice as a private citizen. All of Boniface’s apologizing did create an amicableness between the two, but it would be short-lived, as 1301 marks a significant drop in his public approval. Boniface would not be able to sustain the surge in approval following the Church’s jubilee, nor could he be expected to when the most powerful ruler in the Christian world was targeting him.

Meanwhile, the inquisition of the Cathars was an ongoing affair in southern France, and Philip as a Christian monarch could not appear to be overlooking heresy within his kingdom. The fact was that neither the pope nor the king were on solid footing in the Languedoc, and any effort to suppress heresy would be applauded. Consequently, when the bishop of Pamiers, Bernard Saisset, was accused by the king of trying to incite a rebellion in Languedoc, Philip had

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him imprisoned in Narbonne. Boniface could not risk another crusade against the Albigensians as the Colonnas had married into a powerful Languedocian family, and thus Philip was able to pursue the situation against one troublesome bishop without disrupting the entire region, which would have likely caused an outright rebellion.

Aside from allegedly instigating an uprising against the crown, which was likely an exaggeration, Saisset was outspoken in his criticism of the king. As a staunch supporter of the pope in an unstable region of the country, Saisset was more of a nuisance to the king than a threat. He had publicly remarked that the French king was “the handsomest of birds which is worth absolutely nothing… such is our king of France, who is the handsomest man in the world and who can do nothing except to stare at men.” Here Saisset is making a humiliating comparison of his king to an owl, which is considered wise and beautiful, but of little use in the French government. His view reflects the same belief as chroniclers Geoffroi of Paris and Giovanni Villani, that Philip was merely a figurehead being controlled by his advisors Pierre Flote, Nogaret, and Marigny. Based on the widespread suspicion of Philip’s officers in the Maison du Roi, it would seem that writers were more willing to believe that their king was simply weak rather than cruel, as his persecution of religious men would portray. Modern historians on the other hand were less likely to show sympathy for Philip as pawn of his ministers and viewed his reign as a corruption of the king’s position as guardian of the French church. Joseph Strayer and T.S. Boase, both experts on Philip IV, assert that Philip would not have been able to accomplish as much as he did, domestically such as the arrest of the Templars and internationally while at war with Edward I, without a strong central authority.

25 Strayer, Joseph. The Reign of Philip the Fair, 3.
26 Barber, Malcolm. The Trial of the Templars, 31.
27 Strayer, Joseph. The Reign of Philip the Fair, 4.
Although historians tend to disagree concerning who suggested that Saisset be put on trial, the fact remains that the case went from an internal crisis within the Church of France to a contentious battle of spiritual supremacy. Saisset proved to be the perfect target for the king, as his complaints against the crown were widespread, and the lay people in the north were eager to see the power of the inquisitors curbed with secular power.

By arresting a bishop, even for non-religious crimes, the king had stepped into ecclesiastical territory, as a secular court could judge no ordained member of the Catholic church. Fourteenth century historian Pierre Dupuy’s list of accusations against Saisset shows charges of heresy in addition to the original charges of treason brought by Philip; which suggests that Pierre Flote may have embellished the original charge to strengthen their case. 28 This gives legitimacy to claims that Philip’s regime was capable of inventing heretical charges and torturing witnesses to produce a favorable outcome (similar to the Templars, Philip stood to gain a portion of Saisset’s land if convicted). 29

In both the trials of Saisset and the Templars, there is enough evidence to say that the king may have actually believed they were guilty, rather than trying to eliminate an obstacle to his prerogative. However, by arresting those under the protection of the pope, he was clearly violating canon law.

Like Jacques de Molay during the Templar trial, Saisset was guarded by the king’s men, but was eventually released into the custody of the Archbishop of Narbonne, Gilles Aicelin, at Senlis. After a year he was sent to Rome to stand trial, where the crisis eventually petered out because of Boniface’s incredulity of the charges. Philip had seized the bishop’s land in the mean

In some ways both sides exaggerated the Saisset episode as a way to display authority in the Languedoc region. The pope wanted to appear beneficent by defending a wrongly accuse bishop, while Philip would appear strong against a subversive clergy member who had repeatedly predicted the downfall of the Capetians and encouraged his congregation to support the Aragonese claim to the land.

The already relationship between the pope and his royal vassal was already strained by the Saisset trial when Boniface released the bluntly titled *Ausculta Fili* (*Listen, Son*) two months later in 1301. The bull again reminded the king to stay out of spiritual affairs and criticized his management of France “either through [Philip’s] own failings or at the instigation of evil counselors.”^{31} This bull had as much success in disciplining the king as his previous ones, and it was burned in front of a crowd in Paris by Flote, who was rewarded for his actions by being named Keeper of the Seals, in effect chancellor, of France in April 1298.^{32} To any laymen reading, *Ausculta* would seem like a declaration of superiority over the king, including the temporal realm. Boniface criticized Philip’s choice of advisors and his use of the embargo, but made specific demands on the king to remedy church-state affairs, which made it easy to present to the public as the hostile words of a would-be tyrant.

Philip’s continuation of the embargo prompted the release of *Unam Sanctam* in 1302, which is arguably the immediate cause of Philip’s attempt on Boniface’s life. It declared that no secular ruler could judge the pope because of the “order established by God,” whereas anyone may judge a king. *Unam Sanctam* is reminiscent of *Dictatus Papae*, as both are laden with the theme of papal infallibility:

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If the terrestrial power err, it will be judged by the spiritual power; but if a minor spiritual power err, it will be judged by a superior spiritual power; but if the highest power of all err, it can be judged only by God, and not by man, according to the testimony of the Apostle: ‘the spiritual man judgeth of all things and he himself is judged by no man’ [1 Cor 2:15].

Using the word of Saint Peter, Boniface proclaimed that God is the only power high enough to judge the pontiff, and that through the Chain of Being, the king must submit to his superior. *Unam Sanctam* harkens back to the early Middle Ages, to the coronations of Charlemagne and Henry IV, when monarchs could not rule without papal support.

Temporal power is a gift from God, and must be used in His service; when it is not, the pope is within his rights to correct the monarch. “However, one sword ought to be subordinated to the other and temporal authority, subjected to spiritual power...but they would not be ordained if one sword were not subordinated to the other and if the inferior one, as it were, were not led upwards by the other,” is a straightforward argument for papal supremacy. The idea of a universal church under an almighty church was created using strong rhetoric such as “it may be permitted to him to depose emperors” and “the Roman pontiff alone can with right be called universal.”

In *Unam sanctam*, Boniface implies that two spiritual heads on the metaphorical body of the Church would create a “monster,” scolding Philip for his lapse into the ecclesiastical sphere, “therefore, of the one and only Church there is one body and one head, not two heads like a monster; that is, Christ and the Vicar of Christ, Peter and the successor of Peter...” This affirms that Jesus Christ speaks through Boniface as pope, which leaves no room for a secular head to get involved in ecclesiastical politics.

As a response to *Unam Sanctam*, Philip sent armed guards to a residence in Anagni.

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33 Boniface VIII. Papal Bull, *Unam sanctam*. 

where Boniface was staying. Philip’s minister Nogaret had accused the pope of heresy, simony, and manipulating the pope and College of Cardinals to secure his election and had gone to Anagni to demand the pope appear before a council, likely as a prisoner if he refused to cooperate. The soldiers entered his chambers and “pillaged the pope,” where he witnessed them divide up his clothing, utensils, furniture, and precious metals among themselves. Apparently in protest of the king being called a subject to the pope, Philip’s armed men entered the compound and killed two Colonna guards, and moved to strike Boniface. Although he was not killed during the attack, he died not long after, causing many to blame the stress from the attack for his sudden death.³⁴

The attack in Anagni is often attributed to one man, Philip’s devoted councilor Nogaret. He was also one of the few men involved in the attack on Anagni that Boniface refused to pardon, which suggests that he was heavily involved in the violence that ensured there. Many scholars, including Joseph Strayer, believe that Flote had picked Nogaret to be his successor as both were common layers from the Lower Languedoc. From Flote’s recommendation, Nogaret was able to rise quickly through the ranks in Paris, after an impressive scholastic career at the University of Montpellier, almost directly into the king’s inner circle. After assisting Flote in the conflict with Bernard Saisset, Nogaret became the primary prosecutor of Boniface after Flote’s death in 1302. Nogaret was steadfast in his pursuit of Boniface, and after being excommunicated for his role in the assassination attempt on the pope, he continued to vocally support a posthumous heresy trial until the ordeal was settled between Clement and Philip in 1312.³⁵

The tension between Boniface and Philip escalate so quickly that seven years after the release of Clericis laicos Philip was driven to eliminate Boniface in favor of a pope more

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³⁴ “William of Hundleby’s Account of the Anagni Outrage.”
³⁵ Strayer, Joseph. The Reign of Philip the Fair, 55.
supportive of French policies. The pontificate of Clement would prove to be subservient to the French throne because of the threat that it posed to the papacy rather than actual support of Philip’s methods.
Chapter III: The Decline of Papal Power Under Clement V

From the records of Clement V’s papacy, it seems that he learned from the mistakes of Boniface. Almost immediately after his election, Clement would begin to reverse *Unam sanctam* through by agreeing to hold his coronation in Lyon, move to the papal court to Avignon, and nominate Philip’s grandfather Louis IX for sainthood within his first year as pope. As Philip’s jurisdiction expanded, Clement recognized the dangers associated with crossing the French king and deferred to the king, even in spiritual matters like heresy. Philip wanted to be sure that Boniface would be succeeded by someone more receptive to the French government, and gave his blessing after Clement’s election. Born Raymond Bertrand de Got, Clement was originally from the village of Villandraut in southern France, and therefore would have likely been seen as more of an ally than the Italian Boniface.36

Clement reversed the policies of *Clericis laicos* by granting Philip the tenth he wanted from the clergy to fund his war with England. During the Saisset indictment, he was an advisor to Edward I and remained impartial; it was widely believed that he was a moderate and would make a reasonable pope.37 Historians have claimed that Clement’s main goal for his reign was to reestablish a good relationship with the kings of Europe, and it seemed he made every effort with Philip.

While many contemporaries saw Clement as a good compromise among their choice of cardinals, many hoped that his diplomacy and his moderateness would curb Philip’s involvement in spiritual affairs, which was called “the French plot” by Giovanni Villani.38 In his chronicle, Villani states Clement responded to Philip’s sponsorship with “You will command and I will

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obey, and it will always be settled this way.”

While it was not uncommon for medieval popes to hold court outside of Rome, Clement moved the papal court to Avignon in an attempt to foster a friendlier relationship with the king; historically it had been unheard of for the pope to operate outside the Papal States, let alone the Italian peninsula. The controversy of the move not only stemmed from his court leaving the traditional seat of Saint Peter, but also for being held so close to the turbulent Languedoc region. Even his supporters, such as Cardinal Orsini, were dismayed by his choice of city.

The move caused several problems for France, especially the French clergy who could not support the financial burden of the pope and his retinue. This caused resentment among Clement’s vassals, who also felt they were being ignored in many dioceses when Clement ordered that prelates no longer had to visit each of their churches, creating absentee jurisdiction. The pope allowed himself to become extremely involved in France’s economic crisis by providing abundant fiscal support to the king in the form of tenths between 1304 and 1307.

The balance of power between Clement and the French king was set early on, as Clement took the suggestion from Philip to move his 1305 coronation ceremony from Rome to Lyon. He also nominated nine French cardinals to the College, including Etienne de Suisy, Philip’s personal confessor and Keeper of the Seals, cementing Philip’s “most favored” status.

Many Italians were supposedly upset by Clement’s election, not only because of his readiness to concede to the French king, but for his Gascon heritage. One such critic was Dante Alighieri, who criticized Clement in the final installment of his Divine Comedy, Paradiso, “the usurper of the throne given to me, to me, there on earth that now before the Son of God stand

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vacant, he has made a sewer of my sepulchre...Gascons and Cahorsines are crouched to drink our very blood.”\textsuperscript{43} Italian cardinals also felt they were losing their power with the number of French cardinals increasing and the papal court moving away from their families’ central power. Arguably, the French cardinals nominated by Clement were well qualified for their positions, but still, many like Dante were unimpressed with the Franconization of the papacy.\textsuperscript{44}

One would think that his election to the papacy would have at least been celebrated in France, but this is not true. Except for Bordeaux, where he had been archbishop, the French believed him to be supporting his own family’s interests, and were suspicious of his Gascon heritage (as the south of France was often a source of uneasiness in the north). Both his brother and nephew were members of the church, and saw their positions rise alongside Clement’s. Clement did this as a means to centralize power, which would include an increase in French and English cardinals whose support he could rely on. This would also work to guarantee support from their kings.

Not long into Clement’s papacy, Philip approached him concerning rumors about the Templars brought to his attention. Clement acknowledges that Philip and other French lords have made many unfounded accusations against the Templar Order based on rumors, therefore Jacques de Molay requested that an investigation be conducted in Poitiers. Clement made it clear that he expected to absolve them.\textsuperscript{45} Clement did actually make an effort to defend the Templars in this letter from August 24, 1307 and Clement blames Philip, in part for the rumors surrounding the Temple

Since the master of the knights of your kingdom and others, having heard, so they said, how their reputation has suffered repeatedly at your hands in the eyes of us and some other

\textsuperscript{43} Alighieri, Dante. \textit{Paradise}. Verses 22-59.
\textsuperscript{44} Menache, Sophia. \textit{Clement V}, 45.
\textsuperscript{45} Clement V to Philip IV, August 24, 1307.
temporal lords in relation to the already mentioned deed, have sought with great insistence, not just once, but on several occasions that we seek out the truth of the accusations laid against them…46

Based on this letter, it would seem that Clement was unconvinced of the heretical charges, and was only trying to avoid the same fate as Boniface.

Less than a month after Philip had approached Clement with his suspicions, an arrest warrant was released and that would command that the Templars were universally imprisoned for crimes against God and Christianity. Specific wrongdoings include blasphemy, sodomy, homosexuality, and idololatry; the charge of idol worshipping comes from a testimony claiming brothers would wear a talisman depicting the head of Baphomet on a rope around their waists. Idol worship presented the most heinous crime committed by “this mad cult of people dedicated to the cult of idols...It is not only their activities that and acts that are detestable, for their hasty words also defile the earth with their filth, remove the benefits of the dew, poison the purity of the air and bring confusion to our faith.” Despite his demonizing words that the Templars were destroying their earth with their heresy, he named no sources, only calling them “very reliable people.”

In the warrant, released on September 14, Philip accuses the Templars, “wolves in sheeps’ clothing,” of abusing their power and straying from their sacred purpose. For this, Philip expresses sympathy, acknowledging that they were once a noble group, “a spirit that is rational feels pity for someone who goes beyond the bounds of nature and in its pity is troubled by a people that does not understand why it once had a position of honor because it has forgotten its origins...” In conjunction with papal legates assembled by Clement for the job, royal inquisitors will investigate every single member of the order; although this will lead to the arrests of

46 Clement V to Philip IV, August 24, 1307.
thousands of men, Philip believes that the innocent will have no problem during the investigation if they are truly guiltless. The dossier continues with instructions for the seneschals with the task of investigating the houses, who are told to keep their identities secret and appear convincing as a new recruit to the order. The king claimed in the letter that he was hesitant to believe the rumors, but that there were too many to ignore.47

Months of correspondence passed between Clement and Philip, with Philip outright stating his intentions and Clement halfheartedly trying to convince him otherwise. Although letters between them would suggest that Clement welcomed Philip’s involvement because of his cordial tone, it ultimately only served to tie the church closer to the temporal sphere, making the pope appear comparatively weak. It is significant that the arrest warrant was released by the French court rather than the Office of Inquisition considering Clement had been hesitant to release a warrant himself; Philip was undeterred by all of Clement’s requests for a delay. When it seemed that Clement was too slow to punish apostasy, one of Philip’s lawyers, Guillaume de Plaisans, accused him of being soft on heretics. In reality, Clement had already ordered a council to discuss the problems of the Templars.48 After Boniface’s militant response to the charges against the bishop of Pamiers, and Philip’s eventual victory over the late pope, Clement understood that when it came to the Templars, he should bargain, rather than fight, for their release.

Two weeks after the arrests, Clement V wrote to Philip IV and reminded him of his title “most Christian king” and ancestry from Saint Louis as an attempt to guilt him into releasing the highest-ranking members of the Order from the Paris Temple. When reminding Philip of the favoritism the Church had showed him and that inquisitions fall under ecclesiastical jurisdiction,

47 Order for the arrests, September 14, 1307, 244-248.
48 Strayer, Joseph. The Reign of Philip the Fair, 293.
Clement used an informal tone compared to the demanding tone of *Unam sanctam*.\(^49\) Clement had a duty to the order, which is why he did argue, however gently, that they should be left in the church’s hands. Eventually through back and forth communication, Philip wore him down, as it was clear from his first letter to the pope that this was something he would pursue with or without papal approval, just as he had done with the Bishop of Pamiers. In this letter it is clear that Clement did not want to accuse the entire Templar order of heresy, but does not express his opinion on the validity of the charges. Throughout the ordeal Clement avoided outright arguing against the charges to avoid Philip’s ire from falling on him next, as it had with Boniface.

Despite Clement’s cautioning, Philip went ahead with the Inquisition. This had actually offended the pope, who feared the King was controlling the Inquisition office of France. However, Clement decided to maintain his moderate stance on the Templar accusations and quietly declared that bishops should be able to check the power of the Inquisition in their region, which Philip ignored.\(^50\) A year later Clement would assemble his own committee of papal legates, led by Etienne Suisy, who also had the king’s ear. The immediate cause of Clement’s burst into action after so long was the detour made by a caravan holding the highest ranking Templar officers to Chinon when they should have arrived in Poitiers to be interviewed by Clement in the papal court.\(^51\)

After interviewing the brothers that had arrived in Poitiers escorted by the king’s men, Clement seemed convinced of their innocence. The testimonies he heard convinced him that spitting on the cross and denying Christ during the initiation ceremony were done to prepare the brother for what they might face should they ever be captured in the Outremer, and to gage their readiness to defend the faith. Although Clement understood the tradition, considering their more

\(^{49}\) Clement V to Philip IV, October 27, 1307, 249-250.
\(^{50}\) Strayer, Joseph. *The Reign of Philip the Fair*, 298.
recent history, it was an unnecessary ritual. On August 17th, the three papal prelates absolved each of the brothers of their sins, most having confessed to denying Christ, and assigned them a penance. Barbara Frale in the Vatican Secret Archives discovered the notarized copy of the order with Cardinals Berenger Fredol, Etienne Suisy, and Landolfo Brancacci’s seals in 2001. The original account from August 1308 granting absolution to the Templars, commonly known as Frale published the Chinon Parchment along with her research in 2003. Grishin provides the first published English translation.

The Chinon Parchment is the record of the interrogation and confessions received from five high-ranking members of the Order between August 17th and 20th, 1308. Pope Clement V mentions these three same men as having conducted these interrogations in Vox in excelsio, the papal bull disbanding the Templars released instead of this one. Landolfo was also present at the first deposition of James of Molay, as was Stephan, who is also mentioned in the “Letter of Clement V to Philip IV from October 27, 1307. The investigators ordered these confessions to be published, including the evidence they found and the notations of the witnesses, but this was never done.

The document contains the testimonies and confessions of Raymbaud of Caron, Geoffroy of Charny, Geoffroy de Gonneville, Hugo de Perraud, and Jacques de Molay. Each confessions details sins committed during the induction ceremony, namely denouncing the image of Jesus on the cross and in three cases spitting on the cross. In each case, the brothers claimed to have not denied Jesus in their hearts, as Molay says he “performed the denunciation in words not in

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53 Investigation Carried Out by the Fathers Commissioned by Pope Clement V in the Town of Chinon, diocese of Tours, August 17-20, 1308, 114-133.
54 See Frale’s Il Papato e il processo ai Templari. L’inedita assoluzione di Chinon alla luce della diplomatica pontificia (Viella: 2003) for the Italian translation.
spirit.”\textsuperscript{55} This, as described by Molay in his deposition, prepared brothers for what they might face if captured by Muslims in the Outremer, and appeared to be a universal tradition during initiation. All five brothers also state in the document that their confessions were not extracted through “force, or fear of impending torture.”

All but one of the brothers, Geoffroy of Gonneville, had their heresies conducted during the induction ceremony absolved prior to this investigation, and all were absolved again and restored to the Church by their confessions, as promised in the order for the universal arrest of the Order.\textsuperscript{56} Kissing on the mouth, navel, and lower spine were also commonly done during initiation, and was not considered as serious as sodomy, for which brothers could be imprisoned at Castle Pilgrim, also called Chateau Pelerin, in Atlit, Israel. Only two of the five brothers, mention their knowledge of sodomy within the order. Raymbaud de Caron vaguely mentions “he should preserve purity and chastity, but if he could not do so, it was better to be done secretly than publicly.”\textsuperscript{57} Hugo of Perraud acknowledged sodomy again when he claimed that he warned new members that they should “abstain from partnership with women, and if they were unable to restrain their lust, to join themselves with brothers of the Order.”

Although the papal prelates granted absolution at Chinon with power invested in them by the pope, the document, does not express the pope’s desire that the entire order should be absolved and released, although this would be the next likely step. Grishin, Frale, and Barber have argued that this is a clear message that Clement wanted to absolve the entire order. As the layout of the testimony is very much similar to others collected during the trial, it seems as though the pope would have made more of an effort if this had really been his intention.

\textsuperscript{55} Investigation Carried Out by the Fathers Commissioned by Pope Clement V in the Town of Chinon, diocese of Tours, August 17-20, 1308, 122.
\textsuperscript{56} Order for the arrests, September 14, 1307, 244.
\textsuperscript{57} Investigation Carried Out by the Fathers Commissioned by Pope Clement V in the Town of Chinon, diocese of Tours, August 17-20, 1308, 124.
Read publicly in Vienne four years after the Chinon acquittal, *Vox in excelso* disbanded the Templar Order, claiming that their reputation is too tarnished to continue in their original duty of protecting the faith. The pope quoted the Bible, specifically Jeremiah 32:31-35 to convey his disgust at the alleged deeds of the Order, “this house has aroused my anger and wrath, so that I will remove it from my sight because of the evil of its sons, for they have provoked me to anger, turning their backs to me, not their faces, and setting up their idols in the house in which my name is invoked, to defile.” On account of their sacrifices in the Holy Land, the Church had given the Templars special privileges and respect, which the Church feels were rebuked by their crimes. This impassioned rhetoric hardly sounds like that of someone who had wanted to defend the Templars, and more of someone trying to convince Philip of his accord. This is only further demonstrated by Clement’s defense of Philip against claims that he was trying to steal their property:

He was not moved by greed. He had no intention of claiming or appropriating for himself anything in the Templar’s property; rather in his own kingdom he abandoned such claims and thereafter released entirely his hold on the goods. He was on fire with zeal for the orthodox faith, following in the well-marked footsteps of his ancestors. He obtained as much information as he lawfully could. Then, in order to give us greater light on the subject, he sent us much valuable information through his envoys and letters.

Although they had argued for months privately, Clement never came publically to the aid of the Templars. Until the release of *Vox in excelso*, the majority of imprisoned Templars believed he would come to their defense. Although the pope may have felt a moral obligation to the defend the order, he chose to preserve the reputation of the church, and to give in to

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Philip’s threat of posthumously trying Boniface for heresy, rather than try to salvage the Templar’s credit with reforms. Church historian Heinrich Finke would claim that “no pope of the later Middle Ages was more subservient to a king.” This relationship bred nepotism and simony, which may have contributed to suspicion of church corruption and Philip’s control over the Inquisition. One example was the promotion of Enguerrand de Marigny’s close family members, including his nephew becoming the king’s confessor and Clement’s first nomination to the College of Cardinals and his brother becoming archbishop of Sens. This is significant because Marigny had been one of Philip’s most vocal advisors in pursuing the Templars, and took control of the trial proceeding in 1310.

Before he became embroiled in the Templar affair, Clement maintained a similar stance to Boniface regarding church supremacy and a focus on centralization of church authority. Based on the goals of his papacy, he may be seen as less submissive and more as showing a keen understanding of his own limitation as pope. Clement’s successor John XXII would succeed where Clement did not in reorganizing the papal curia to establish firm independence from the French crown. Rather than focusing on his own papacy, Clement adjusted his moderate diplomacy to coincide with Philip’s pursuit of the Templars, acknowledging the Church’s decline into a state in which the pope could no longer claim to be infallible.

Chapter IV: The Templar Trial as a Stage for the Church-State Conflict

The papacy was not a secure position as many previous popes had fallen out of power because of disagreements with a monarch. In many instances, the charge of heresy was thrown around by both parties in an effort to discredit the other and win the support of the Christian population. This was certainly the case with the Knights Templar, who stood trial as pawns in a political dispute between the French monarch and a papacy in decline. Philip was insistent that Boniface posthumously stand trial for simony, among other crimes, and used the threat of a trial as leverage against Clement. The papacy, already losing their power of influence in international affairs, would not survive the blow of having a pope condemned for defending canon law in the long run.66

The widespread abuse of power at the hands of the Inquisition also plagued the church, and made it possible for Philip to get away with involving himself in ecclesiastical affairs like the trials of Boniface and the Templars. Corruption within the ranks of inquisitors was not uncommon, especially among those hoping to gain influence with the king or pave the way for a family member. A charge of heresy was enough to ruin’s one reputation for the rest of their life (and after, as was the case of Boniface), which could be used to eliminate political enemies.67

As Saisset’s trial demonstrated, Philip may have had a great deal of influence over the inquisitors in the Languedoc, despite their nominal allegiance to the pope. This is evidenced by Philip’s close relationship to the Inquisitor of France, his advisor and confessor Etienne de Suisy.68 Boniface had suspected the enquêteurs of collecting the charges against the bishop of Pamiers, even fabricating some, in order to weaken his jurisdiction over the south of France.69

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Based on the accusations made by Philip, and the property seizures that followed, Boniface’s suspicions may have been correct. The property taken from the Templars was by far the most valuable that he gained from any of his previous dispute with the religious community and elsewhere; in 1306, Philip began a campaign to expel the Jews from his country so that he could collect their property, and the Lombards were pursued similarly in 1310. Clement allowed the king to guard Molay and the Templar commanders after they had all confessed, and the king immediately took control of their accounts. By taking control of all of the Templar houses in France, Joseph Strayer claims that “Philip was able to do what no other medieval king had done; he destroyed a large, wealthy, and influential religious order.”

Having taken a crusade vow in 1312, it is likely that Philip had planned to use the money acquired from the Temple to fund it.

Nogaret carried out the trial of the Templars, as Philip wanted to deflect attention away from himself. Nogaret would become an infamous character during Philip’s reign, especially as he was involved in every one of Philip’s witch-hunts, from Bernard Saisset, to the expulsion of the Jews, and the heresy trials of Boniface and the Knights Templar. He held the position of Keeper of the Seals from 1307 to his death in 1313, most of which he was excommunicated for. Nogaret’s promotion coincides with the investigation into the Templars, as he replaced Pierre de Belleperche as Keeper of the Seals immediately following the arrest of the Templars across France insinuating that Nogaret may have earned the position by his willingness to pursue an international organization as powerful as the Templars.

Although Nogaret was in charge of seeing the investigation through, Philip as the king and protector of the Catholic faith in France never gave up complete control of the situation and he always maintained the deciding vote. The king appealed to the public in 1308 concerning

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the rumors against the order, and the king’s word as “defender of the faith” was enough to
convince many of the clergy and nobility of their guilt. If any of the French clergy opposed an
investigation into the order, they were wise enough not to challenge it.\textsuperscript{72}

Similar to the trial of Bernard Saisset, Philip attributed everything to Nogaret, whose
position was completely dependent on the will of the king as he was still an excommunicant after
the debacle in Anagni. Even the pope, when Philip mentioned Clement’s name in the arrest
warrant, became implicated.\textsuperscript{73} Philip made sure that if he went down, he would not do so alone,
even if he had masterminded the plan. Philip’s devoutness was well known which does
complicate the general argument held by many historians that the charges were no more than
malicious rumors; on this point Clement had come to Philip’s defense in \textit{Vox in excelso}. The
question of whether or not the charges are valid may never be known, as Philip kept no records
his personal thoughts.

In 1305, while Clement was still in Lyon, Philip approached him regarding the rumors of
the Templars’ “evil practices.” There is enough evidence to suggest that these rumors circulated
quickly through France; the secrecy surrounding chapter meetings and initiation ceremonies
were highly suspicious to the lay population, but Philip could do nothing until he was certain.
When he did act, he did so very swiftly, perhaps out of fear that Molay would leave France for
the Templars’ international headquarters in Cyprus to rally support from the houses across
Christendom.

Jacques de Molay was one of the first to be questioned after the arrests were made, and
his testimony shows how dumbstruck the Templars were by the inquisition. The Head Inquisitor
Matthew of Paris at the Paris Temple gathered his testimony ten days after his arrest. In his

\textsuperscript{72} Strayer, Joseph. \textit{The Reign of Philip the Fair}, 286
\textsuperscript{73} Order for the arrests, September 14, 1307, 244-248.
testimony, Molay recalls his induction ceremony into the Order forty-two years earlier, during which he was asked to spit on the image of Christ, which he refused, spitting on the ground instead. He and other brothers continued the tradition of receiving brothers this way but denied homosexual acts.\textsuperscript{74} The most interesting part of this short testimony is when Molay admits that he help continue these heretical traditions, especially spitting on the cross as “he said on his oath that his intention was that they should do them and order them to do what had been done to him, and that they should be received in the same manner.”\textsuperscript{75} Alan Forey makes the case that it was not uncommon for Templar kinsmen to kiss upon entering a temple, and this was largely believed to be a weak foundation for the charges of explicit kissing and sodomy brought against them. More specific claims were uncommon as the Templar households and meeting were very private, therefore non-Templars made accusations based on inferences or rumors. Accusations made by non-Templars are highly unreliable for this reason, but were enough to begin an investigation (although these statements were not used as evidence within the trials).

Gilles Aicelin, Archbishop of Narbonne, conducted the first official deposition of Molay, which is more detailed than his initial interview, but provides no new insights as Molay continues to deny any wrongdoing. This interrogation was conducted on November 28, 1309, after he had been imprisoned, and tortured, for two years. Aicelin read him a confession that had supposedly given to the Bishop of Tusculum, but Molay was shocked, and informed the inquisitors of his concerns. The inquisitors respond that “they were not there to pick up the gauntlet for duel” and continue the interrogation.\textsuperscript{76} Here the inquisitors give Molay the opportunity to defend his entire order as their Grand Master, and Molay agreed to defend the

\textsuperscript{74} Deposition of the Templars at Paris (October-November 1307): James of Molay, Grand Master, October 24, 1307, 252-253.
\textsuperscript{75} Deposition of the Templars at Paris (October-November 1307): James of Molay, Grand Master, October 24, 1307, 252-253.
\textsuperscript{76} Proceedings of the Papal Commission at Paris (November 1309 to June 1311): First Deposition of James of
Order as best as he could without counsel; a delay was granted for him to prepare. In a continuation of the interrogation two days later, Molay informed Nogaret that he came to the conclusion that he was inept to defend the order as he “an impoverished knight who knew no Latin, and that he had heard in an apostolic letter that the lord pope had reserved himself for the judging of him and the other Templars. Two years in prison had not deterred the Grand Master from believing that the pope was defending their reputation on the outside. Three months after his second deposition, Molay continues to wait to appear before the pope, and “humbly begged the said lords of the commission not to press him on these issues until he had appeared before the lord pope, when he would say what he thought to be appropriate.” The inquisitors assure him that they do not wish to investigate him personally, but that his testimony is part of their investigation into the group as a whole.

The ultimate goal of this inquisition was to obtain the confessions of French brothers so that their property could be appropriated as Philip saw fit. Another advantage held by Philip was that any royal clerk appointed to a major benefice required his approval so that he could keep close tabs on vacancies in which to install his protégés. Without Philip’s presence, the international trials turned out drastically different; in many regions their investigations took place only because the pope had commanded it. Complaints against the Order were far fewer in Cyprus and the Iberian Peninsula, as they operated mainly as a military order in those regions, and did not possess the same wealth as other chapters. On the whole, the Templars were tried much less vigorously outside of France; the evidence gathered by Nogaret and Suisy must not

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Molay, Grand Master, November 26, 1309, 286-289.
80 Menache, Sophia. Clement V, 81.
81 Forey, Alan. The Debate on the Trial of the Templars, 1307-1314, 12.
have been enough to convince the monarchs of Europe of their communal heresy.\textsuperscript{82}

There is also reason to believe that torture to induce confessions occurred only in France. Despite the thoroughness of the early accounts of interrogations, the French inquisition carried out by Suisy was done in the king’s interest. The inquisition would not have been able to carry out the enormous task of the arrest without close planning with the king, whose men assisted in every stage of the trial. Confessions received from brothers across the continent were hardly uniform, which implies that the acts they were accused of were not being committed across the board.

Testimonies gathered outside of France shows how weak the charges were, and how difficult they were to apply to the Order as a whole. The testimony of Geoffrey of Charney, preceptor of Normandy, received in Paris on October 21, 1307 has him Confess to denying Christ three times, kissing his receptor on the navel. He justified his blasphemy by saying that he did not deny Christ in his heart, the same excuse as Molay. He also did not force brothers he received to spit on the cross or deny Christ because he realized it was “profane and contrary to the Catholic faith.”\textsuperscript{83} British and Cypriot testimonies provide a clear difference in how the trial was carried out abroad as there were no confessions received during the inquisition. This may demonstrate how Templar houses adjusted the induction traditions to fit their different cultures, or may be attributed to the lack of torture.\textsuperscript{84} Only in France were brothers consistently admitting to charges of spitting on the cross, denying Christ, or idol worship. In testimony from Cyprus, where the Templars owned large amounts of property, the closest most brothers would come to a confession was knowledge of a belt used by brothers “to keep himself from lust,” as was

\textsuperscript{82} Strayer, Joseph. \textit{The Reign of Philip the Fair}, 289.
\textsuperscript{83} Deposition of the Templars at Paris (October-November 1307): Geoffrey of Charney, Preceptor of Normandy, October 21, 1307, 251-252.
\textsuperscript{84} Nicholson, Helen J. \textit{The Proceedings Against the Templars in the British Isles}, 113-159.
repeated multiple times, but “denies they wound them around any head as stated,” referring to idol worship of Baphomet. In England, where testimonies are almost exactly the same to those from Cyprus, King Edward II did not even want to pursue the Templars, and did so only at the urging of his soon to be father-in-law, Philip.

In the grand scheme of the conflict between Clement and Philip, the testimonies show much influence Philip had over the inquisition in France. When he had originally ordered the arrests in October 1307, he had later written to the Theological Masters of the University of Paris. In January 1308, Philip had started to question whether his temporal power allowed him to involve himself in spiritual affairs based on his suspicions. As he comes from a line of Christian kings, Philip felt that he had an obligation to protect the Catholic faith, and expressed so to the theologians, “if [blasphemy] is done openly the temporal power wants to exercise the force of its power against them by reason of the jurisdiction it has been granted.” His justification taking action was that the Church was too lenient with heretics, “it prays for the relapsed who recognize their error against whom the secular court exercises the force of jurisdiction;” he rationalizes that the secular courts most often punish relapsed heretics and carrying out the sentences, while the church who had failed to prevent the relapse only prays. Basically, he claims to be doing the church a service by preempting them.

If Philip had been searching for approval, the theologians did not give it. In their reply dated March 25, 1308, they stated that the only justification for a temporal lord’s intervention in ecclesiastical affairs would be if the defendant presented a clear threat. The theologians stated that even under the most dangerous circumstances, Philip still would not have had the authority

85 Gilmour-Bryson, Ann. Trial of the Templars in Cyprus, 156-235.
86 Lord, Evelyn. The Knights Templar in Britain, 191.
87 Question of King Philip IV to the Masters of Theology at the University of Paris and Their Reply, January-March 1308, 258.
to imprison the Templars and prevent prelates from interviewing them, “it is permissible for the secular power to arrest them, with the intention of handing them over to the church as soon as the occasion arises.” Even better would be if the church approached the king first and asked him to carry out the task on behalf of the church.  

Despite cautioning that the Templar trial would violate ecclesiastical law, Philip continued to keep the Templars imprisoned in Paris and Chinon. Philip ignoring the warnings from the theological masters shows his determination to secure an outcome of the trial in favor. When Clement disbanded the order in 1312 at the Council of Vienne, it was not because they were heretics, but because they no longer served their original purpose and had embarrassed the church. Considering that all of the Templars’ property and wealth went to the Knights Hospitaller rather than Philip, the dissolution of the Templars was not a complete success.

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88 Question of King Philip IV to the Masters of Theology at the University of Paris and Their Reply, January- March 1308, 260-261.
Chapter V: Conclusion

What makes the trial of the Templars so important to medieval history is its relation to the general decline of the Catholic Church in Western Europe and the rise in monarchical power. Philip’s relationship with the Church during his reign ultimately shows the waning temporal power of the pontiff as Boniface struggled to create a universal church and preserve his power and influence over the Christian monarchs. After failing to intimidate the king as his predecessor Gregory VII had done with the Holy Roman Emperor in 1077, the pope had lost his leverage in the secular sphere that defined church-state relations in the early Middle Ages. Inheriting a devalued seat in the Holy See, Clement understood that his papal clout did not carry enough weight to absolve the Templar Order during their trial by Philip.

The significance of Philip’s pursuit of the Templars is that he sacrificed his symbiotic relationship with the church in Rome to expand his power as the King of France into the Office of Inquisition, and overtook the church’s responsibility of pursuing heretics. By investigating Philip’s personal relationships with the two popes Boniface and Clement, we can see how the conflict evolved from a dispute over the King’s spiritual power during the trial of Bernard Saisset to a laissez-faire papal policy during the Templars’ inquisition.

An examination of the feud between Boniface and Philip over ecclesiastical issues like the trial of Bernard Saisset and the unification of the Templars and Hospitallers shows the evolution of cooperation to threats of violence in just three years. By releasing the papal bulls Clericis laicos, Unam sanctam, and Ausculta fili, Boniface challenged the shifting disproportionate power of church and state aggravating not only the French king, but also his subjects. The French public, already wary of church corruption and exasperated by the crusading period admired their king for pursuing heretics when it seemed the pope would not. Boniface’s
threats of excommunication for defying the orders of the heir of Saint Peter had the opposite
effect than anticipated on Philip, damaging their rapport so that not even the public statement of
friendship in *Ineffabilis amor* could repair it. As Boniface struggled to justify his series himself
after the public backlash, he slowly lost his grip on the power of the papacy when he lost the
king’s ear completely and was attacked in his Anagni residence by Nogaret.

Inheriting the Holy See after such a crisis forced Clement to adjust his moderate policies
to comply with the wishes of the preeminent France, acknowledging that papal legislation would
be impossible without the support of the Philip. Clement appeared conscious of the disparity
between papacy and French monarchy, which may be why he never challenged the king’s
charges against the Templars after they had already been arrested and imprisoned. Clement not
only disengaged from the Templar trial, but reversed the statements of papal infallibility released
by Boniface in good faith of future collaboration. Months of correspondence between Clement
and Philip achieved nothing in the vein of negotiating the release of the Templars into church
custody. Even the tone of *Vox in excelso* seems positive that their agreement to disband the
Templars would lay the foundation for a stronger alliance between for the future French
monarchy and papacy.

Until the release of *Vox in excelso*, Templars believed that Clement would hear their
testimony and absolve them, but this only happened in Chinon in 1308, and legates represented
Clement. Clement’s distance from the trial may be attributed to Philip’s involvement in the
inquisition and as demonstrated at Anagni, Philip did not tolerate admonishment from the
church. Philip’s influence over the trial proceedings, if not his direct involvement, is shown by
the stark difference in the results of the Templar inquisition within and outside of France.
Besides suggesting the use of torture exclusively in France, the lack of confessions received in
Cyprus and England show a more lax investigation, insinuating Philip’s involvement. It is also evidence of Clement’s absence in the process.

The trial in France therefore serves to present how the dramatic shift in ecclesiastical policies of Boniface and Clement were a result of Philip’s interference in the inquisition. The different approaches of Boniface and Clement show less of a weakening resolve to follow through with heresy trials, and more of a growing comprehension of the limitations of papal authority. Although Clement did not protect the Templars from secular persecution, as he should have, he preserved his own seat of power from further violations by Philip into the realm of spiritual authority.
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**Testimony**


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